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EFFECTS OF GROUP COUNSELING ON
UNDERACHIEVERS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD SELF AND OTHERS

BY



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Effects of Group Counseling on Under-achievers' Attitudes Toward Self and Others" submitted by Sister Annette Mageau in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of group counseling upon talented underachieving Junior High School Students in relation to two variables: (a) the student's acceptance of self and (2) his ability to relate to others.

At first, the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test was administered to all junior high school students in Racette School, Alberta, and IQ's were converted to z-scores. Class examination averages were also obtained, using scores in arithmetic, science, social studies, language and literature. These were changed to z-scores. The difference: $z\text{-IQ} - z\text{-achievement}$ was considered as the measure of underachievement. Sixty students who had maximum difference were chosen for the study. Thirty of them were randomly assigned to the experimental group, the remaining thirty to the control group.

The experimental group was divided into three subgroups, each of ten students so that each student could get an opportunity to participate actively in group discussions. There were ten structured group counseling sessions, one for each week. Three counselors were randomly assigned to guide the three subgroups during each of the sessions.

After the tenth week when the last session had been held, sections IB, 2A, 2D and 2E of the California Test of Personality was given to all the subjects. Section IB of the questionnaire gave scores on 'acceptance of self'.

Sections 2A, 2D and 2E together produced scores on 'ability to relate to and accept others'.

Student's t-test was used to examine the two null hypotheses:

1. The experimental and control groups did not differ in relation to acceptance of self.
2. The experimental and control groups did not differ in the ability to relate to and accept significant others.

Neither of the hypotheses was rejected. The non-rejection may have resulted from the lack of sensitivity of the questionnaire to the two attitudes measured. This seems to get some reinforcement in the counselors' informal observations during the group counseling sessions which seemed to show a favorable change of attitude in most of the students with regard to acceptance of self and others. Other reasons may have been the lack of follow-up after the group counseling sessions. It may also have been due to the fact that personality changes take much longer than ten weeks to show up in tests.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The problem of underachievement has always been a concern of educators. Until recently, research has been primarily concerned with the relationship between level of ability and scholastic achievement, without much attention being paid to other factors. In the literature there are often references to the relationship between maladjustment and academic achievement, but objective efforts to isolate relevant personality characteristics of students not achieving according to their intellectual potential is still lacking. It seems reasonable to speculate that underachievement is related to at least some personality variables.

The present study investigates the possibility of finding out whether personality factors, such as hostility toward parents and teachers, indifference to responsibilities, aggressiveness toward self and others, and a general tendency to become elusive are involved in underachievement, and whether group counseling is effective in this context.

Group counseling in this study is directed toward assisting individuals in coming to a fuller realization and acceptance of self and others.

One way of assisting the group in moving toward this

openness to experience is through the relationship with the counselor in which each individual is given the freedom to experience his own feelings and those of others without being threatened in doing so.

Since it is impossible to investigate in one study all complex feelings and attitudes, the present research has attempted to find out whether an empathic and understanding group atmosphere has some bearing upon self-acceptance and the ability to relate to others, as far as talented underachievers are concerned.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present research attempts to investigate the effectiveness of group counseling on talented underachievers¹ in relation to certain variables. This study focuses attention on talented underachievers in a Junior High School. One of the greatest wastes in our culture, is that presented by such individuals. Counseling these young people in the hope of helping them solve their problems has led to the present study.

Until recently research has been primarily concerned with the correlation between level of ability and academic success without paying much attention to personality factors. This study involves an attempt to study two

¹ A talented underachiever is defined as one whose academic achievement as determined by grade or achievement test scores is substantially below his intellectual ability or IQ.

personality variables which seem to predispose to scholastic underachievement. They are:

- (i) the clients' acceptance of themselves, and
- (ii) the clients' ability to relate to others.

Self acceptance was chosen because it seems essential in understanding the dynamics of personality and behavior.

In order to attach value to the self concept, the individual must become involved in the process of self-discovery and self-acceptance. The ideal self, that is, the person one wants to model after, must be introduced so that the individual may compare his behavior with his ideal self or model. As this self becomes better accepted, it merges with the ideal self into what is experienced as the 'real self'. This new self, according to Carl Rogers (1954), revealed and understood through group counseling, enables the client to understand those aspects of himself and of his life which are causing him anxiety, and the opportunity to reorganize himself and his relations to others in the direction of self-actualization and maturity.

The group counseling method has been chosen for this study primarily because it is a process in which attitudes, emotions, self-and-other-concepts are evaluated with regard to modification of behavior. The success of this hoped-for change in clients is dependent to a considerable degree upon the attitudes and personality of the counselor. The role of the counselor in this study is of primary importance as she is the person who enables group members to involve

themselves in the process of self-discovery. This is achieved essentially through an empathic attitude which encourages group members to untangle the reasons why they are what they are and why they behave the way they do.

Although the counselor is often the only adult to whom young underachievers will turn for help in their difficulties, it is obvious that other people, such as parents, teachers and peers are equally important in the adolescent's self-actualization¹ and his scholastic success.

The relationship between parents and underachieving adolescents is of utmost importance. Parents are the first educators of their children. Since the child's early years, they have served as models for the development of attitudes, meanings, values and goals that may influence his success or failure in life. Group members often indicate in counseling that their parents are inconsistent as far as discipline is concerned and that they lack the understanding needed by most typical adolescent children. Group members seem to be pleading for warmth and acceptance, which they feel they cannot get from them. Yet, by definition, this interpersonal interaction involves mutual trust, understanding, and acceptance, not only from the 'problem' adolescent, but from the parents also.

¹ Self-actualization, in Rogerian terms, refers to an integrating person who can appreciate the values of each new experience and come to terms with inner and outer changes without a disintegrating loss of equilibrium.

Teachers are directly involved in the problem of the underachieving adolescent and that explains why they are designated as significant others² in the life of the student. An attitude of cooperative effort and understanding should characterize the student-teacher relationships in order to stimulate positive feedback from the perplexed adolescent and thereby help him integrate certain attitudes previously unacceptable to his own thinking. In group discussions with students, many counselors deplore the fact that some students have developed negative feelings toward teachers and the subjects which they teach, because they find it difficult to accept a person who shows neither understanding nor sensitivity to their feelings and who make disparaging remarks about their inability to achieve.

Since acceptance is a necessary condition for honest communication, the establishment of friendly interrelationships between parents, teachers and students can help the underachiever in gaining new perspectives on the many experiences he has acquired in coping with his decision-making and problem-solving.

It is therefore appropriate to conclude that group counseling may increase the clients' acceptance of themselves and improve their ability to relate to others. It is also assumed that these changes are necessary conditions

¹ 'Significant others' refers to the people directly involved in the underachiever's life, specifically parents, peers and teachers.

for motivating them to accept and to develop their academic potentialities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Very little is known about the many variables that affect scholastic underachievement among young talented adolescents. Kimball (1952) considers it reasonable to assume that underachievement is not a surface phenomenon but rather a disturbance related to the personality of the individual.

Since adolescents feel that they are understood and accepted by their peers who have problems similar to their own and who are willing to find a solution to these difficulties. Group counseling offers an ideal atmosphere in which they may be able to express their emotions and sift over the circumstances of life that have caused them concern. Loyalty to peers often goes side by side with hostility toward parents, teachers, and significant others. This dichotomy may well be rooted in the self-acceptance concept. Rogers (1954) shows that the individual is capable of understanding those aspects in his behavior that are causing him concern, and that he can modify his perception of self through counseling and thereby become more understanding and more accepting of self and others.

Several studies have investigated the effect of group counseling with talented underachievers for the purpose of gaining new insight into the client's acceptance

of self and others. The present study attempts to further investigate and determine whether group counseling does, in fact, result, in clients' gaining more accurate perceptions of their own behavior, and whether they are more able to accept their faults and potentialities.

This study attempts to show that when a client discovers that others accept him in the group, he may find that he can better accept others, and eventually, that he can better accept himself positively. Assuming that a client can modify his attitudes toward self and others as a result of his interaction with his peer group and the counselor, he may also be expected to be able to modify and improve his behavior toward significant others. This implies that changes in one's self acceptance make it possible for him to become more reality-oriented toward others in his environment. With varying degrees of depth, the client is able to discover that he is capable of understanding, accepting and helping himself to achieve significant growth and satisfaction. After he begins to accept himself, the client must learn to live with his new self and to communicate this new self to others.

The outcome of this research may show the importance of group counseling in helping talented underachieving adolescents who believe that their peers can and want to understand and accept them. Group counseling may help these young underachievers to discover within themselves the reasons that make them behave the way they do. And,

consequently, just as the group setting is appropriate for modification of one's attitude toward self within the group, so may it enable the client to modify his attitude and behavior toward adults.

The Case of Ruth, who was a subject in this study, has been selected here to illustrate the effects of group counseling in reference to acceptance of self and relatedness to others. Ruth initially displayed attitudes of hostility toward herself and others.

Ruth is the fourth child in an Indian family of nine children. She is thirteen years of age, in grade eight, and attends school quite regularly. Her aggressive attitude stems from the family, as the father is often away, while the mother is alone to raise a large family. When the father does come home quarrels arise between wife and husband and the children inevitably become involved in the 'turmoil'. However, Ruth admits that she likes her father because he doesn't get after her as her mother does for doing her homework.

During the first session, Ruth was very outspoken as she vented her hostility toward her mother and some of her teachers. Although she felt accepted by the group, she soon found out that they rejected some of the statements she made as, for example, when she admitted that teachers had no right to interfere when a student refused to do her homework. Little by little, she realized that other students had problems similar to hers, but that they were trying to

to solve them with the help of the counselor and the group members. She found that they accepted their own failings, admitting that teachers and parents could offer some help too.

Ruth then began to blame herself for her misfortunes: "teachers don't like me, but it's my fault; everything I do is wrong." Again the group members came to her aid by reassuring her that she was capable of solving her own problems through personal effort and attitudinal changes toward herself, her mother and teachers.

At the end of the study, Ruth's comments were: "During the sessions I learned that I was aggressive and that I had two personalities. Now it seems I have only one, and I will try to change it." It is not yet known, because of the lack of followup, whether Ruth improved her relations with her mother and her teachers, but Rogers' findings that if therapy is successful, clients will be much more acceptant to themselves and more tolerant of others, seems to apply to the case of Ruth also.

This illustration shows that, as the hostile student becomes able to express his pent-up feelings and needs within the safety of the group, he will begin to reorganize his perception of himself and those around him. Ultimately the individual is moving toward greater self-discovery and greater self-acceptability. As he becomes personally involved in group problems, he is able to gain new experience which will help him to become a better adjusted person.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature of the past few decades frequently refers to factors related to scholastic underachievement. Many research studies have investigated changes in attitudes toward self, toward personal values, parents, and counselors. Those related to the present study are reviewed in this chapter.

IDENTIFYING UNDERACHIEVERS

Talented underachievers are generally described as students whose academic achievement sufficiently falls short of their intellectual capacities. A common technique used for identifying such individuals is to convert the measures of the student's IQ and his achievement to standard scores or z-scores. Other commonly used scores are ranks and percentiles. Some research studies, however, have used less rigorous methods.(Coleman, 1965; Ohlsen and Schultz, 1955).

Achievement patterns, like other behavior patterns, can be considered to be related to personality organization. Therefore, research in group counseling often attempts to modify the student's achievement pattern through counseling relationship techniques.

GROUP COUNSELING APPROACH WITH UNDERACHIEVERS

Some counseling psychologists, (Hobbs, 1951; Froelich, 1958; and Mink, 1964) have found that group counseling¹ is a real social situation and that it seems particularly appropriate for work with adolescents whose problems are usually social in nature. It is a relatively new approach for many counselors, requiring a sound understanding of counseling and group dynamics. According to Gawrys and Brown (1965),

It is a process in a group setting designed to assist individuals with normal, developmental concerns. It is an experience in 'living' with others and developing the kinds of multiple relationships which are related to the numerous social groups in one's life (p. 306).

There is also a consensus among the above mentioned psychologists that students attending counseling sessions regularly and participating actively in group counseling are more likely to improve academically.

Gawrys and Brown (1965) found that group counseling was a valid method for assisting persons in need - for helping individuals to become better-functioning and better-adjusted social persons. They agreed that:

¹ Group counseling is defined as a special form of activity whereby the counselor stimulates individuals in the process of searching for, and establishing meaning and values in a world of change and contradiction.

Group counseling is a unique experience insofar as a 'safe' environment is created which permits each individual to take a more inward look in the presence of others while allowing him also to see and share another's life. It is a process in which attitudes, emotions, self-and-other concepts are the foci with ultimate responsibility for change resting squarely on the shoulders of the members of the group (p. 207).

Boy, Isaksen and Pine (1963), found that since it is often difficult to relate deeply to one individual, it becomes much more difficult for the counselor to involve himself deeply with every member of the group. On the other hand, they showed that a deep relationship can be established between the counselor and the group members and that the latter can be given the opportunity to explore the factors likely to be associated with their particular problems.

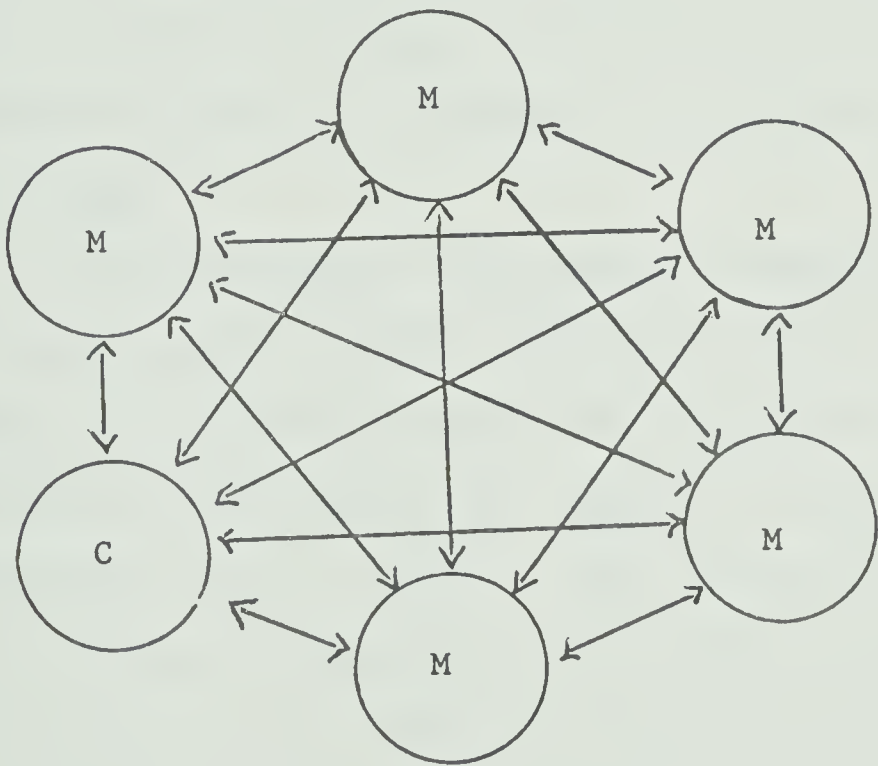
The group counseling approach tends to center attention on many individuals at the same time. It has been found appropriate for work in groups consisting of individuals having the same problem. Boy, Isaksen and Pine (1963) have reported that there is a strong evidence that in group counseling some individuals find it easier to relate to a group of peers in the presence of a counselor, than to a face-to-face relationship with the counselor alone. The research studies of Broedel, Ohlsen, Proff and Southard (1960) have indicated that group counseling gives the individual an opportunity for reality-testing and the experience of dealing with other individuals in an empathic understanding and acceptable climate. It is a recognized

fact that the therapeutic strength of the group is the result of the interaction among its members. It would appear that group counseling refers to counseling through the group, wherein the central focus is not entirely on the counselor, but upon member-member interactions. The counselor acts as a facilitator, but the solution of the problem comes from the group members.

This interaction between the members and the counselor may be illustrated by Figure I.

FIGURE I

GROUP FORMATION



M- Member
C- Counselor

In the above diagram, the position of the counselor, according to Hobbs (1951) indicates that, although he may be of great assistance because of his special training to facilitate group interaction, he is not the only person who can offer help in the effort to solve group problems. In such a relationship the group's focus is upon the development of social awareness and the mutual sharing and resolution of common problems of concern to the group members.

PERSONALITY FACTORS IN RELATION TO UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Although literature contains several references on the relationship between emotional stability and academic achievement, objective attempts to identify specific personal characteristics of students not achieving well have been lacking.

In a research project with bright underachieving students, Shaw and Brown (1957) found that one of the salient causes of underachievement was related to the personality variables of the individual, namely, a very poor concept of themselves and of others. This has been substantiated in the findings of Calhoun (1956), Caplan (1957), and more recently of Broedel et al (1960), and Mink (1964). These authors concluded from their work with hostile adolescents that group counseling would increase their client's acceptance of themselves and improve their ability to relate to others.

Although numerous studies have been focused on the

personality characteristics that may influence academic underachievement, there does not appear to be any research indicating clearly that certain traits of behavior patterns characterize underachievers. Broedel et al (1960) have gathered enough evidence to support that there is a striking contrast between the underachiever's friendly attitude with his peers and his hostility toward significant others.

Because every human being has a unique personality and because the underachiever is the first to 'suffer' from his failure in school, self-discovery or self awareness plays an important role in discovering the cause and results of one's success and failure in life. (Self-discovery is used here to mean the total field of self-perceptions, that is, all the percepts one feels to be the "I" or "me"). This self-discovery gives the individual the capacity latent, if not evident, to understand those aspects in his life that are causing him anxiety, and he has the capacity to re-organize his experiences in the direction of self-actualization. Self-actualization, according to Carl Rogers (1954), implies personal growth, that is, increasingly integrated positive action on the part of the client. It refers to an integrating person who can appreciate the values of each new experience and come to terms with inner and outer changes without a disintegrating loss of equilibrium.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AS A VARIABLE

Achievement or lack of it, like other behaviors, is considered to be related to 'personality organization', that is, to the individual's ability to reorganize his behavior so that he may gain an increase of self-confidence, an improvement in acceptance of self and of others, and a reduction in tensions.

However, it seems possible to test some aspects of this personality organization through client-centered counseling. The client's interaction with the counselor and the other members in the group may result in an increase in congruence between the self and the ideal-self concepts. Since the self refers to the characteristics of the client which are reflected into awareness, self-ideal refers to the client as he would like to be. The client must therefore try to reach a 'happy medium' between these two concepts. Rogers' (1954) findings indicated that low correlations between the self and ideal-self are based on a low level of self-esteem related to a low adjustment level. Client-centered counseling for the individuals in his study led to a rise in the level of self-esteem and adjustment. Thus it would appear that group counseling provides an opportunity for the client to develop self understanding in order to modify his attitudes and perceptions in his interpersonal relationships. Rogers (1961), explains this change and personal development as follows:

Individuals who live in such a relationship even for a relatively limited number

of hours show profound and significant changes in personality, attitudes, and behavior, changes that do not occur in matched control groups. In such a relationship the individual becomes more integrated, more effective. He has a better understanding of himself, becomes more open to his experience, denies or represses less of his experience. He becomes more accepting in his attitudes toward others, seeing others as more similar to himself (p. 36).

This significant modification seems to be attributable to successful counseling.

ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

The findings from psychotherapy are fairly convincing with regard to demonstrating that when counseled, clients learn to accept and live more comfortably with themselves. However, it has not been proved conclusively that they learn to accept and live more comfortably with significant others.

In a study for further investigation of the effect of counseling upon clients' attitudes toward others, Rogers (1954) found that: "Client-centered therapy produces changes in clients' attitudes toward others in the direction of greater acceptance of and respect for others (p. 168)."

Using an instrument devised in the California studies on authoritarian attitudes to remove prejudice from the deep layers of personality of the individual, Rogers (1954) used two experimental and two control groups for the study. His results did not support the hypothesis stated above. He concluded that factors other than those of an experience in therapy were operating to effect changes in the scores of the

test during counseling.

Rogers' findings suggest that a better hypothesis may have been the one which predicted that clients experiencing successful therapy would become less severe in their attitudes toward others. This would indicate that successful counseling¹ would influence one's attitudes toward others.

It is likely, according to Rogers, that therapy influences one's attitudes toward significant others such as parents and friends and can, therefore, be measured to some degree, as supported by the findings of Sheerer (1949) and Stock (1949).

It would seem, however, and this has been supported by the findings of Roth and Meyersburg (1963), Broedel and Ohlsen, Proff and Southard (1960), that it is not possible for underachievers to accept significant others such as parents and teachers, if there is no effort made on the part of the latter to accept the student in spite of his idiosyncracies.² It would seem that this reciprocity of understanding between the underachiever and his elders in

¹ Successful counseling, according to Rogers, refers to the client's ability, after counseling, to modify his attitudes in such a way as to make him more consistent with his new reality.

² The term idiosyncracies refers to a constitutional peculiarity of temperament, as for example, aversion or hostility.

a necessary prelude to promoting growth, understanding and self-actualization.

Morrow and Wilson (1961) support the hypothesis that family morale fosters the academic success or failure of children by showing positive or negative attitudes toward teachers and others involved in the profession of education. Growth and understanding will result when parents encourage their children to cooperate with these significant others.

Using group counseling as a method for promoting this individual growth and self-actualization with underachieving adolescents, Broedel et al (1960) undertook a long-range project to investigate the application of group counseling in treatment of talented youth. Four groups of underachieving grade nine students were treated in small group sessions. The growth of the clients was evaluated in terms of grades, scores on the California Achievement Test Battery, responses to a Picture Story Test, and observations made by parents, clients and counseling psychologists. The results of the study showed that three of the four groups studied showed significant growth. Positive changes were found in improved scores on the achievement test, increased acceptance of self and others, and improved ability to relate to peers, siblings and parents.

Other studies showed substantial improvement in attitude as well as achievement. Caplan (1957), for instance, used a design of experiment similar to that of Carl Rogers (1954). He gave a series of group counseling sessions in

self concept to a group of adolescent 'problem' boys. Using the Q-technique, he found significant increase in the concept of self and ideal-self within the experimental but not within the control groups. These changes were assumed to be associated with group counseling.

Caplan's findings also suggest that if a more integrated self structure¹ enables one to be less tense, less disturbed, and more accepting and understanding of others, one may easily predict that positive changes in behavior might occur. The above statement is in line with Rogers' findings that similar increases in self and ideal concepts will remain relatively constant. Thus, Caplan's research indicates that group counseling is a promising method for dealing with many of the problems of youth and warrants serious consideration and further investigation.

As mentioned previously, change in the direction of increased acceptance of self through group counseling may have little effect upon the underachievers' academic performance without a willingness on their part to relate to peers, siblings, teachers and parents.

Brookover and Paterson (1962) found substantial correlations between the students' self concept and his general ability, and significant others' concept of himself

¹ Self structure may be interpreted as adaptive behavior where a structured derivative motivation is established to counteract an unacceptable original motivation.

also. This would indicate that attitudes of parents, teachers and peers are often transmitted to the individual through the identification process, provided a reasonably healthy relationship exists. It would appear that a fruitful effort toward remediation of underachievement might well be effected by raising the expectations of significant others.

SUMMARY

It appears from the review of literature that the results found in the behavior patterns of underachievers are primarily due to a failure to evaluate the dichotomy of attitudes which seems to exist between the peer group and significant others in the individual's environment.

Many of the research studies have concentrated on (1) self concept and (2) concept of others as important determining variables in personality change.

This review implies that modification of attitudes toward oneself and toward others requires closer interaction with these significant others -- a factor often neglected in earlier studies.

CHAPTER III

INSTRUMENTS AND COLLECTION OF DATA

As mentioned in Chapter I, the present research attempts to identify talented underachievers and to determine the effectiveness of group counseling with respect to the student's attitudes toward himself and toward significant others. The subjects chosen for this study were young adolescents in grades seven, eight and nine.

BASIC QUESTIONS

The study gave rise to the following questions:

1. Does group counseling influence the understanding and acceptance of self?
2. Does group counseling enable the underachiever to relate better after the counseling sessions to significant others?

This study will attempt to answer the above questions.

IDENTIFYING THE UNDERACHIEVERS

THE SAMPLE

The subjects of the study were chosen from 375 students in grades seven, eight, and nine, attending Racette Junior High School in St. Paul, Alberta. These pupils belong to French, English, and Indian communities. Approximately thirty per cent of students came from the farm, eight per cent were Indians from the reserves and sixty-two per cent

were from the town of St. Paul.

The first step in the study was to identify under-achievers. For this purpose, The Canadian Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, verbal and non-verbal, was administered to all the 375 students in the school mentioned above in order to measure the intellectual capacity of the students. Another measure was required to determine the students' academic achievement. Teacher-made tests were administered by the various teachers at the end of November in mathematics, language, science, social studies, and literature. The marks were averaged for each student. These teacher-made tests encompassed a review of the work covered since the beginning of September. Then the IQ's and the class averages were converted separately to Z scores (See Table 1).

The sixty students who had maximum value of ' Z IQ minus Z Class Average' were identified. These students were the underachievers in this study.

COLLECTION OF DATA

After the sixty underachievers had been selected by the method described above, they were randomly classified into two groups: Group E, the experimental group, and Group C, the control group. For this, every second name from the list of the sixty underachievers was assigned to the experimental group; the remaining to the control group.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the identified

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF z-DIFFERENCES BETWEEN I.Q.'S
AND CLASS GRADE AVERAGES

AVERAGE CLASS MARK	I.Q.	DIFF.	FREQUENCY
-0.55	1.87	-2.42	1
-0.55	1.31	-1.86	1
-0.73	1.09	-1.82	2
-1.25	0.52	-1.77	3
-1.76	-0.05	-1.71	2
-0.95	0.71	-1.66	2
0.83	2.44	-1.61	1
1.05	2.42	-1.37	1
0.30	1.66	-1.36	1
-0.01	1.31	-1.32	1
-0.22	1.09	-1.31	3
-1.08	0.21	-1.29	1
-0.73	0.52	-1.25	4
-1.25	-0.05	-1.20	6
-1.55	-0.45	-1.10	2
-0.95	9.13	-1.08	2
-0.36	0.71	-1.07	7
-0.23	1.29	-1.06	6
0.83	1.86	-1.03	2
2.11	2.97	-0.86	1
0.81	1.66	-0.85	1
1.05	1.87	-0.82	1
0.52	1.31	-0.79	6
-0.01	0.76	-0.77	3
TOTAL			60

underachievers by sex and grade. It is interesting to note that out of the sixty identified cases of underachievement, sixty-five per cent were boys, while thirty-five per cent were girls. This is consistent with the findings of Zingle (1965), and Braun (1969), which showed that the ratio of underachieving boys to girls in Junior High School is approximately 2 : 1.

TABLE 2
UNDERACHIEVERS CLASSIFIED BY SEX AND GRADE

GRADE	UNDERACHIEVERS				TOTAL
	E GROUP		C GROUP		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
7	3	2	3	3	11
8	9	2	6	4	21
9	8	6	9	5	28
TOTAL	20	10	18	12	60

Another fact worth noting is the tendency, in this study, for underachievers to increase in number as they move from grade seven to grade nine. This seemed to be especially true for boys.

The experimental group was then randomly subdivided into three subgroups, each of ten students, so that the counselor could

- a) understand how each client was feeling and

thinking,

- b) observe who was assuming responsibility for his actions,
- c) perceive the interaction and growth among the members.

The selection of the group size was guided by Sniffen and Cohn (1962), and Paterson (1968), who suggested that in a group of ten, each member had a much better opportunity of participation.

An attempt was made to the effect that membership in the subgroups was as non-coercive as possible. The experimental subjects were given the freedom to join any of the three groups, although they were asked to limit each group to ten. This freedom of membership seemed to facilitate active participation in the discussions. It gave the students a better chance of discussing freely problems within a group of their own choice with whom they felt at ease. Moreover, it was noticeable that the more attractive the group was to its members, the greater was the influence felt by each member of the group.

The control subjects followed regular classroom instructions. They were not told that they were participating in the study.

The experimental groups met simultaneously in three different rooms. The researcher counseled one group while the other two counselors guided the other two groups. This randomized rotation of counselors had the following

advantages:

1. The researcher had someone who, by sharing the same experience, could discuss the progress made by the clients after each session, and
2. through this sharing of experience, the three counselors gained new insight into the attitudes and behavior of the clients.

There were ten topics of discussion. They were structured and the three counselors attempted to keep the discourse directed toward the topics. Although some attempt was made to follow Rogers' non-directive method of counseling, the structuring of group sessions and rotation of counselors was a radical departure from his work. However, because the clients were divided into sub-groups, it was deemed necessary to follow a uniform counseling outline with the three sub-groups. The counselor introduced each topic at the beginning of the sessions, but each member in the group was given every opportunity to express his or her attitudes and feelings on any event that caused him/her anxiety or discontent in their daily lives.

A summary of each topic was prepared. The counselor read this outline to the subjects at the outset of each session. This was followed by a few questions to initiate the discussion.

The counselors were randomly assigned to the groups for each topic in order to randomize the differences between them and thus to control such differences as a possible variable.

TABLE 3
TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE COUNSELING SESSIONS

Session	Topic of Discussion	Gp. 1	Gp. 2	Gp. 3
1	Curriculum and program of studies.	T.C.	S.M.	A.C.
2	Relationship with teachers	A.C.	T.C.	S.M.
3	Pupil involvement in class activities	S.M.	A.C.	T.C.
4	Use of spare periods during the day	S.M.	A.C.	T.C.
5	Opportunity of working in groups	S.M.	T.C.	A.C.
6	Homework assignments	A.C.	T.C.	S.M.
7	Relations with parents	T.C.	S.M.	A.C.
8	Study habits	T.C.	A.C.	S.M.
9	Tests and grades	S.M.	T.C.	A.C.
10	Interest and motivation	A.C.	S.M.	T.C.

Letters under groups 1, 2 and 3 refer to the randomized counselors' initials.

During ten weekly sessions, each lasting approximately sixty minutes, this study explored the possibility of using group counseling in order to modify the attitudes of counseled students along the dimensions of self acceptance and acceptance of others. A list of the discussion topics is shown in Table 3 and explained on the subsequent pages.

The session topics were organized as follows:

1. Curriculum and program of studies: The counselor pointed out that the school curriculum must provide, not only instruction in the ways of living, but also vocational opportunities in the different fields of the world of work.

Questions: Do the subjects taught in Junior High School meet your needs and aspirations? Are you allowed to discuss and prepare the time-table with the teachers? Are you allowed to choose the optional subjects taught?

2. Relations with teachers: Every teacher should be child-centered. A learning climate is created when the teacher shares her knowledge and experiences with the students.

Questions: What are your relations with the teachers in the classroom? Is there friendly communication? Do you contribute your share in discussions initiated by the teacher?

3. Pupil involvement in classroom activities: Teachers are guides and resource people, but it is the individual who develops his innate capacities to gain new experience and insights.

Questions: Do you participate in classroom projects or other activities? Do you enjoy working with the other students or do you

prefer working alone? Do you take the leadership in such activities or do you prefer being told what to do?

4. Use of spare periods during the day: Spare periods offer a change of activity and a moment of relaxation from the routine classroom lessons.

Questions: How do you spend your spare periods? Is there a library where you can do research or read books for relaxation? Or do you prefer spending your spare in town?

5. Opportunity of working in groups: New ideas, new experience and new meaning result from working in groups.

Questions: Do you enjoy working in groups? Do you have opportunities of working with others? Do you feel you learn more in group work than by having the lessons taught by the teacher?

6. Homework assignments: In order to cover the program of studies during the year, it is sometimes necessary to do some of the assignments at home.

Questions: Do you have an opportunity to discuss the homework assignments with your teacher? Have you time to do your assignments at home? Do your parents encourage you to do your homework? If not, why?

7. Relations with parents: Parents are the first and most important educators of their children.

Questions: Do you love and respect your parents? Are you happy to be home with your parents after school hours? Do they look at your report cards? Are they satisfied with your achievement at school?

8. Study habits: Each student in the group was given a small booklet on study habits. Relevant questions were asked on certain items which gave the reasons why a student should form good study habits.
9. Test and grades: One of the best criterion for measuring progress or failure in school is to compare the marks one gets throughout the year.

Questions: Are you anxious to improve your marks or are you indifferent to any progress? If so, why? How do you feel about failing your grade? Do your teachers or parents expect too much of you?

10. Interest and Motivation: These two factors stimulate inquiry into the values and meanings which are becoming attached to the life in the larger world outside the group.

Questions: Have you a goal in mind as you go through high school? Do you have sufficient knowledge about the different occupations that are of interest to you?

Questions such as the ones mentioned above gave rise to new inquiries from the students. Having a goal in mind seemed to stimulate in them the need for better achievement.

THE INSTRUMENT

A few days after the tenth session, the experimental and the control groups were convened to the school auditorium where they were asked to answer four subtests of the California Test of Personality. The entire questionnaire contains 180 items, in twelve equal-sized section. Section IB which refers to personal adjustment was chosen to test

acceptance of self. Sections 2A, 2D and 2E put together tested the second variable, the client's ability to relate to others, that is, the individual's social adjustment or his acceptance of others, especially parents and teachers.

- * One girl in group E discontinued the group counseling sessions because of illness. The E group then numbered 29. Therefore, only 29 students in group C were asked to write the California Test of Personality at the end of the study, the extra student having been excluded randomly.

SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt was made to describe the basic questions of the study, the identification of under-achievers, the formation of random groups, and the counseling techniques used with the experimental groups of underachievers. It also described the instruments used in this study and their administration. The instruments were four sections of the California Test of Personality: section IB, referring to acceptance of self and sections 2A, 2D and 2E, together testing the clients' ability to relate to significant others. The ten structured counseling sessions dealt with topics oriented toward each member's self-discovery and self acceptance through an empathic inter-relationship with the peer group and the counselor. The next chapter describes analyses of data and the conclusions reached.

CHAPTER IV

PROCEDURES, DATA, THEIR ANALYSIS, RESULTS

As stated earlier, this research involved the effects of group counseling with underachievers in a Junior High School. There were two personality variables studied:

(1) the counselee's acceptance of self, and (2) his acceptance of others such as parents and teachers.

Underachievers were identified and classified into two random groups. The experimental group had group counseling sessions whereby the students discussed their problems as they interrelated with the peer group and the counselor. At the end of the experiment extending over ten weeks, four subtests of the California Test of Personality were administered to the two groups and the test results were analyzed. The present chapter deals with the procedures, the data and the results obtained.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

Group Sessions

The thirty experimental subjects were briefly introduced to the research. They were then asked to form three groups with ten students in each group. All the groups met simultaneously in three different classrooms for the sessions. At each session, the counselor gave a brief outline of the topic and invited the students to give their personal view on what seemed to cause them dissatisfaction or anxiety in

their scholastic life. The counselor took notes as the students attempted to solve their problems through group interaction. The counselors rotated for the sessions according to the group number they had randomly drawn.

CALIFORNIA TEST OF PERSONALITY

The California Test of Personality was chosen for this study because it is an instrument for identifying and evaluating the more intangible elements of total complex patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving of the individual. Its main purpose is to provide the data for aiding individuals to maintain or develop a normal balance between personal and social adjustment. It seemed appropriate in this study to use it in order to measure the individual's ability to accept himself and others as a result of group counseling.

The test is organized around the concept of life adjustment as a balance between personal and social adjustment. It consists of a questionnaire containing 180 items. The ninety items in the Personal Adjustment half are designed to measure evidences of six components of 'personal security'; the ninety other items measure components of 'social security'. The test is, thus, divided into twelve sections, each section containing fifteen questions. However, for the purpose of this study, only four sections or subtests were selected. Subtest IB tested acceptance of self. Subtests 2A, 2D and 2E taken together, seemed relevant to

test the individual's ability to relate to and accept others. These four sub-tests were chosen since they seemed to be more specifically related to this study.

Some of the items in this test seemed to touch relatively sensitive personal and social attitudes, and it is a known fact that student attitudes may change in a relatively short time. Therefore, the reliability of the instruments appear to be lower than what one would like it to be. The specific adjustment patterns which are held to be the best indicators of adjustment (or lack of it) were selected by the author of this study because, by identifying the causes of deviation in student behavior, it would provide a basis for further group or individual counseling.

Administering and Scoring the Test

The twenty-nine students in the experimental group, (one student had been left out because of illness) and twenty-nine students in the control group, (one student was excluded at random to have equal sized groups) answered the above mentioned questionnaire. The directions were as follows:

Write the information that is called for at the top of your answer sheet. There are twelve subtests in this questionnaire, each having a number and letter title. You are required to answer four of the subtests only, namely, 1B, 2A, 2D, and 2E. These titles are written on the board. Please check before you go on to the next subtest. Choose YES or NO to answer each question on the answer sheet.

Make a heavy black pencil mark between the two lines beside your answer. The following is a sample question:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Do you have a dog at home? | Yes

No
_____ |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Table 4 gives the scores obtained by each student on each of the four sections. Columns 2 and 5 give the scores on 1B: acceptance of self. Columns 4 and 6 give the means of measuring variable 2: the student's ability to relate to and accept others.

Analysis of Data and Results

The null hypotheses of this study were:

1. The experimental and the control groups did not differ in relation to acceptance of self at the end of the experiment.
2. The experimental and control groups of talented underachievers did not differ in the ability to relate to and accept significant others at the end of the experiment.

The scores given in Table 4 were analyzed to test the above hypotheses. Two sample Student's t-test was used for this purpose. The results obtained are given in Table 5.

Table 5 shows the t-values obtained from the analysis of data for each of the two variables:

1. the clients' acceptance of themselves,
2. the clients' ability to relate to others.

TABLE 4

SCORES OF THE EXPERIMENTAL (E) AND CONTROL (C)
GROUPS ON SUBTEST IB AND SUBTESTS 2A,2D,2E

GROUP E			GROUP C		
Subjects	Subtest IB	Subtests 2A,2B,2E	Subjects	Subtest IB	Subtests 2A,2D,2E
1	12	13.3	1	14	12.6
2	09	10.3	2	07	08.6
3	07	11.0	3	13	12.6
4	13	10.6	4	14	10.3
5	10	11.0	5	14	04.0
6	06	08.3	6	09	09.6
7	13	11.0	7	05	08.3
8	03	07.3	8	01	04.0
9	08	08.6	9	11	08.3
10	10	11.6	10	11	06.6
11	12	12.0	11	10	12.0
12	08	11.6	12	05	07.0
13	10	09.3	13	05	06.3
14	11	09.3	14	14	12.3
15	13	11.6	15	06	10.6
16	13	09.0	16	10	08.3
17	05	07.0	17	10	11.3
18	04	06.6	18	04	07.6
19	13	13.6	19	12	10.0
20	09	10.3	20	08	09.3
21	06	10.0	21	09	04.0
22	13	09.0	22	11	08.6
23	12	09.6	23	09	12.0
24	10	08.3	24	13	09.3
25	09	08.0	25	11	09.6
26	11	07.6	26	08	05.6
27	10	06.6	27	13	09.0
28	11	10.6	28	11	05.6
29	09	08.3	29	08	09.0

TABLE 5

C AND E GROUP MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS
AND THE VALUES FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND
CONTROL GROUPS

Variable	Group E Mean	Group C Mean	Group E Standard Deviation	Group C Standard Deviation	DF	t
1	9.66	9.14	2.18	3.39	56	0.622
2	9.72	8.71	2.65	3.22	56	1.455

Neither of the two null hypotheses was rejected.

The t-test of the differences of the two hypotheses was not significant at the .05 level so they were not rejected.

The t-values related to the two hypotheses failed to touch statistical significance. This may have been due to a number of reasons. Some of them may be:

1. The test items may not have been sensitive enough to test the two specific variables mentioned above. Although the questionnaire correlated more with clinical findings (Syracuse University, 1949) than any other personality test, it was found that the majority of subjects are more inclined to blame themselves and others in the questionnaire than they do in the interview. This may have been the case in this study. The items may have been less ego-involving to the clients than they were in the group counseling sessions.
2. The duration of the experiment may have been too short to give each client sufficient time to study his problem in depth.

Some Non-test 'Data'

Some observations related to the group sessions, though not suitable for statistical analyses, are worth mentioning here. The three counselors reported to have noted the presence of a considerable amount of dissatisfaction and

aggression against self and especially against significant others during the first three or four sessions. Gradually, it was found that the attitude changed as the group members moved forward toward a better understanding of their personal responsibilities in solving their academic problems. The members who experienced successful counseling, that is, those who admitted openly that group discussions were helping them, became more acceptant of themselves and of significant others such as parents and teachers. It was also noted that twenty-one of the twenty-nine members counseled showed great concerns about their academic underachievement. They also admitted that self acceptance and more positive relationships with significant others, especially teachers, were crucial in improving their marks in school.

SUMMARY

This chapter described the administration and scoring of the instrument, and the analyses of the data. As a result, neither of the two null hypotheses was rejected. It was found, however, from the observations and the new experiences gained through the group counseling sessions that the members of the experimental group modified their attitudes toward self and toward significant others, they also showed remarkable concern about improving their marks in school.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study has attempted to find how groups of individuals undergoing and not undergoing group counseling compare on (1) acceptance of self, and (2) ability to relate to and accept significant others, particularly parents and teachers.

To identify the underachievers, the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test (Canadian Edition) was administered to the whole population of the Junior High School at Racette School in St. Paul, Alberta. The IQ's were then converted to z-values. The class grades received on the first report card in November were also averaged and converted to z-values. The difference between the two z's for each subject was found. Then the sixty students who had maximum value of z_{IQ} minus z-class were chosen for the study. They were called the talented underachievers in this study.

These sixty talented underachievers were then randomly assigned to two equal-sized groups: group E, the experimental group, and group C, the control group.

The experimental group was then divided into three subgroups for the purpose of forming smaller groups for counseling. Instead of random assignment, the subjects were given freedom to join any one of the groups.

Three counselors were randomly assigned to the three groups before each counseling session. The counselor took part in the group sessions, thereby studying the attitudes and problems of the clients as they interacted with the group members and the counselor. This interaction was brought about by means of ten structured sessions. The three groups met simultaneously once a week for a period of ten consecutive weeks. Each counselor took notes as the clients discussed their problems with the group. This departure from Rogers' non-structured method of counseling was chosen for the purpose of giving the same treatment to the three experimental groups.

The instrument used at the end of the study was the California Test of Personality. Four of its twelve subtests were chosen for the study. Subtest 1B which was related in part to the individual's acceptance of self was used to test the first of the two hypotheses mentioned below, while subtests 2A, 2D and 2E put together tested the second hypothesis, that regarding the individual's ability to relate to and accept others. The selected subtests were administered to both the experimental and the control group.

The null hypotheses of the study were:

- (1) the experimental and control groups did not differ in relation to acceptance of self at the end of the experiment.
- (2) the experimental and control groups did not differ in ability to relate to and accept others at the end of the experiment.

The t-values for the two hypotheses were not large

enough to be significant at five per cent level. Therefore, the hypotheses were not rejected.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As the study dealt with a small sample of the Junior High School students of St. Paul, in Alberta, the findings may not generalize to all junior high school children. However, they would perhaps apply to the past and future students of that particular school. Structuring each counseling session and discussing the results with the counselors, amounted to a marked departure from Rogers' theory of unstructured counseling. This may have impeded some of the clients from disclosing inner feelings that caused them anxiety and concern.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of follow-up beyond the experimental period. Changes in personality and behavior involve a long-range term of interactions between the counselor and the group. The absence of significant differences may have been due to the short time of experimentation.

Teachers and parents who are the client's most significant others need to change their attitudes toward under-achievers. Implicit in this proposed explanation is the fact that group counseling per se is not adequate in bringing about better school performance unless it is accompanied by closer cooperation and understanding between the counselor, the teachers and the parents. These significant others must

become aware of the needs and dynamics operating in the individual and must be willing to interpret for him the changes which he may observe.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some suggestions for further research are offered below:

1. Broedel, Ohlsen, Proff and Southard (1960) and Mink (1964) have found that group counseling is appropriate for working with underachievers whose problems are often similar in nature, but they have also recommended a follow-up of individual counseling with the students who need further help. It may be possible for the counselor to invite all counselees for individual counseling during the interval between sessions. This may prove advantageous to those who are too shy to discuss their problems openly.
2. Since it has been found that hostile and aggressive behavior on the part of the underachieving adolescent is based upon attitudes one holds toward oneself (Mink, 1964, Broedel, Ohlsen and Proff, 1960), the degree of self acceptance seems to merit research.
3. A study may be initiated to develop a personality test with questions relevant to the underachiever's (a) acceptance of self, and (b) his acceptance of significant others. The absence of significant differences

in this study may have been due to the instrument being insensitive to the type of effects which were expected to be visible.

4. Significant changes in the school achievement of underachievers might well be wrought through the counselor working with parents, either individually or in groups with the student present also.
5. Many students agree that harmony between themselves and the teachers provides an effective learning atmosphere. Therefore, there is a need for research in teachers accepting or rejecting the underachiever and his idiosyncracies.
6. It is further suggested that a wider sampling and a much longer period of experimentation may give the students more time to involve themselves in studying, evaluating and eventually solving their problems.
7. Where two or more counselors are involved in a study with a group, it is suggested that they interview the same group throughout the study in order to study the clients' problems in greater depth.

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APPENDIX A

COMMENTS OF STUDENTS IN GROUP
COUNSELING SESSIONS

COMMENTS MADE BY STUDENTS AT THE END OF THE STUDY

It was deemed opportune to hold the last group counseling session at the Blue Quills Student Residence which is three miles from St. Paul. The purpose was to take the students away from their routine classroom atmosphere. The students enjoyed it.

At the end of the session, the clients were handed a sheet of paper entitled Your Comments, and were asked to give their honest appreciation of the group counseling sessions. The items on the list were as follows:

1. What I have learned about myself.
2. What I have learned about others.
3. What I thought of the sessions. Have the following helped me?
 - a) Students
 - b) Counselors
 - c) Topics discussed

(1) Most students gave evidence of new experiences in self discovery and self acceptance as they related to each other and to the counselor in the group sessions. A change of attitude toward self was clearly expressed through statements such as these: "Now I know I'm not that bad," or "We all have similar problems; I think I can solve mine now."

(2) Positive acceptance of parents and teachers was found on ten of the papers in statements like these: "I

guess we're a little hard on our teachers and parents. They try to help us in their own way," and "When I get along with my teacher, I find it easier to study."

(3) (a) That an atmosphere of trust and understanding existed among the group was evidenced by such key expressions as: "I felt I could trust each member in the group." or "I felt that I was liked and understood."

(b) The counselor was considered by most of the students as the dynamic person who "understood us and in whom we could place our trust and safety."

(c) Interestingly twenty-one of the twenty-nine clients showed considerable concern about their achievement in school. Nevertheless, many of the clients mentioned that their marks on weekly tests given by the teachers had improved since the beginning of the group counseling sessions. This ties in neatly with the research findings of some counseling psychologists that group counseling is an effective technique in working with talented under-achievers.

TABLE 6

RESULTS OF ANALYSES

VARIABLE	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	SDV 1	SDV 2	DF	T	P-ONE TAIL	P-TWO TAIL	
1	9.66	9.14	2.81	3.39	56	0.622	0.2683255	0.5966511	NS
2	11.86	10.24	1.92	2.67	56	2.603	0.0059013	0.0118026	NS
3	9.17	8.69	3.58	4.06	56	0.472	0.3194598	0.6389197	NS
4	8.14	7.21	2.45	2.93	56	1.291	0.1009635	0.2019270	NS

Although the ratio of the mean difference was not significant for the two variables, Table 1 shows that one of the subtests in variable 2 (taken separately) was significant at .01 level of confidence.

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